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ABSTRACT

To meet the need for factual and objective information relating to public schools, this report examines the following perceptions about American education: (1) trends in SAT scores show a decline in the quality of public education; (2) schools are costing more and producing less; (3) reducing the educational bureaucracy will free much money needed to improve schools; (4) business is bearing the brunt of a basic skills deficit; and (5) American education should be like Japanese education. Careful examination of research evidence indicates that these perceptions are not based on facts. SAT scores, designed to help predict individual students' college success, were not intended to rate the general productivity or quality of public schools. National average scores have remained relatively stable, despite increasing numbers of students taking the tests. The second perception disregards the additional responsibilities assigned to schools through reform efforts, court orders, federal guidelines, and state mandates. The third perception is false because education bureaucracies are not top-heavy; elimination of central office administrator salaries would not appreciably affect teacher salaries or class size. Also, business is not investing heavily in remedial training programs. Although American schools can learn from Japan's respect for education and emphasis on academic learning, American educational reforms must occur within the context of our own cultural values. (Contains 52 references.) (MLH)

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